

~~ Special Report ~~

"The Six Secret Persuaders To Use In Every Offer You Make"

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Since everything that you sell is going to be bought by a human being, wouldn't it be great if you knew the six great influencers on human behavior?

When these six secret motivators are included in a sales presentation, whether it be in a short ad, a longer ad, a sales letter, or a long presentation...any offer at all, I've seen amazing results.

I've put these in order of use in the marketing process, sometimes they'll need to overlap or even change the order to fit the situation.

SECRET PERSUADER #1 - What happens in nature when a vacuum is created or found? That's right, there is an attempt to fill that void. Now remember, human nature also follows the laws of nature.

Most all of the time, when someone does a person a favor, does something nice, gives them something of value for free, or basically provides any kind gesture, whether it be large or small, without any apparent "strings attached"...this act provides an imbalance in the relationship...in "nature"...in "human nature".

And there is an incredible amount of subconscious pressure on the recipient to give back in some way. This filling in the void, we call...

"RECIPROCATION"

In marketing the word FREE, has the most response of any word that you could ever use. That's why so many marketers use it over, and over, and over again. Everybody wants something for free, don't you?

You say, "Yes, but is there any obligation?"

And the answer is, of course, "Free, with no cost or obligation."

Now, why does this obligate the person anyway?

Because if something of real value is given to the person, an imbalance is created, a void in nature that will need to be filled. The void may not be filled immediately, but if the recipient has gotten great value and use from the gift, there will always be a nagging subconscious motivation to reciprocate in some manner.

Now let me say this, you'll find that some people just don't seem to reciprocate at all.

Could it be that they didn't receive the full value of your offer, they didn't appreciate the full value of your offer, or are they are just "non-reciprocating" people?

The first two are your problems, because you should always make sure someone knows, understands and appreciates the full value of what they are receiving.

The last one, the "non-reciprocating" person, well, you need to just move on. Some people go through their whole lives never learning how great it is to help others along the way, and being helped along the way by others.

So the first thing to do in your marketing is to make a risk-free offer to your prospect...FREE is always good...with no cost or "obligation" of course.

SECRET PERSUADER #2 - Now what you're trying to accomplish step-by-step-by-step, little-by-little is to develop a relationship with your prospective customer.

And the first thing you would like them to do is to take a small action step and just "raise their hand a little" to let you know they're interested and have them ASK for the FREE offer.

Now I didn't just say give them the FREEBIE without them at least asking for it, did I? No, they need to show some action toward you, sort of like a fish nibbling on the bait, before you spend your money or time giving them the FREEBIE.

This is done by using a short ad and offering a Special FREE Report or giving a FREE sample if they stop by the store, etc.

The idea here is to get an ever-so-small...

"COMMITMENT with CONSISTENCY"

...from the person, because when someone takes action, even if it's very small, they have made a commitment. And most humans (at least the ones you want to do business with) are still raised to honor their commitments...and to be consistent in their behaviors.

Throughout your relationship they will be testing your commitments and consistencies, you will be encouraging their commitment and consistency in buying from you.

A little note here, it's always better to have the boat reel to the fish, rather than have the fish know he's caught and just reeled in and yanked into the boat. In other words, small commitments from your prospect will help them jump in your boat, and have it all be their own idea.

SECRET PERSUADER #3 - Have you ever heard that before someone will buy from you, they must first "know, like and trust" you?

Getting someone to know you is the easiest, you just throw your offer at them and they'll "know" you.

However, the second step is to get them to "**LIKE**" you.

May I suggest that the quickest way to get someone to like you is for you to let them know that you like them (reciprocation at work here?).

Please understand that not all people are going to like you and you're not going to like all people. But if you take this approach you have a lot better odds of finding customers.

And always write your ads and letters as a personal note to a real, live and breathing person. Just use plain talk, like when you talk with your closest friends, and please no "hi-tech psycho-babble" using big 25 cent words that even your mother doesn't know. Keep it simple.

Now this "know you, like you, and trust you" leads us to the next power persuader...

SECRET PERSUADER #4 - I don't know about you, but when I hear ANYBODY say "trust me"...then that's the last thing I'm going to do. When YOU ask someone to trust you, it sends up all kinds of red warning lights, flashing brighter than a five-alarm fire.

So how do you get people to trust you quickly and go ahead and buy from you. You've got to use the secret persuader called...

"SOCIAL PROOF"

This is to simply provide your prospect with testimonials and endorsements of your products/services. There is nothing more powerful than your happy customers telling in their own words (not your cleverly crafted words) why they like doing business with you.

SECRET PERSUADER #5 - To get people to buy from you, you've got to take a leadership role with them. Remember, you've gone through the first four persuaders with them and they're still with you...now's the time to tell them what they should do to take action and buy.

You must be or present yourself as an...

"AUTHORITY"

You need to be the authority figure...the expert...the only person to buy from (who has told them, you?...no...your customers and third parties (by endorsements or other social proof...articles written about you, books, articles, newsletters you've written, etc.)

Interestingly, most people don't want to make a decision and it's better that you give them a plan of action to say "yes" to. At this stage, people are wanting you to lead them (they already know, like and trust you).

SECRET PERSUADER #6 - There is one persuader that tends to help motivate humans to action and you must create and manage this to your advantage in every offer you make. It is the power persuader called...

"SCARCITY"

People want things that solve their problems or make them feel good about themselves that are of good quality...and they want it even more if the quantity is limited.

Remember the laws of supply and demand.

If the demand for a product/service is high and the supply is low, then the price that kind be charged will be accepted readily (or you may be able to raise your prices to create more profit per unit sold).

Be sure to include all six of these persuaders in all of your offers (ads, sales letter, presentations, etc.). You'll see a dramatic increase in your net results.

My friend, since you're interested, for more background and details on these techniques, I recommend you read "Influence--The Psychology of Persuasion" by Robert Cialdini. I've made it easy for you to order it at a discount at www.amazon.com ...and hurry, supplies are limited.

(by the way, can you count the six persuaders in the preceding paragraph?...they are all there)

You can also read more about Dr. Cialdini's real-life research on how these six principals are used by visiting... <http://www.influenceatwork.com>

Originally published at
<http://www.landofsilence.com/interview.html>

Book: Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

Dr. Robert CIALDINI Interview on influence, September 1999

CWII: In order to set the stage for everything that we're going to be discussing, I think it's important for our listeners to understand that the principles that we're going to cover are not just theoretical. It's not that you woke up one morning and thought that all this stuff sounded like a good idea, but there is, in fact, some research that is behind all the principles that we're going to discuss. Could you tell our listeners a little bit about that?

CIALDINI: Yes. I want to do more than talk about a theory of influence; I really want to talk about a practice of influence. How it is that one person can arrange more successfully to get another person to say yes to a request. And I realize that the way to do that was to go beyond my university environment, where I currently work, and get into the world where the influence wars are being fought all around us, everyday. And it seemed to me that there were professions and practitioners within those professions whose business it is, after all, to get others to yes to them. Whose business, whose economic livelihood depends on the success of the strategies they use to influence others in their direction.

So I began to infiltrate as many of the training programs of these professions as I could possibly get access to, because it seemed to me that it was in those training programs that the accumulated wisdom of the people who really knew what moved individuals in their particular domains would be concentrated and would be passed on to succeeding generations of influence professionals. So, I took training in as many of these training programs as I could possibly access. I learned how to sell automobiles from a lot, I learned how to sell insurance from an office, I learned how to sell portrait photography over the phone, I was the guy from Olan Mills, I was that guy, and I didn't stop there. I infiltrated some advertising agencies. What do the advertising copywriters do that produces a successful ad that moves people. I interviewed charity organizations to see what the fund raisers did to get people to say yes. I did the same thing with a public relations firm - how do they get people to move in their direction? I even interviewed recruiters, armed service recruiters. I even interviewed cult recruiters - what do the cults do that so powerfully brings people in and holds them there?

And across it all, I look for the commonalities, I look for those features that occurred in common, in parallel, in each of these professions, where people's economic existence depended on the success of the procedures they used. And if I found a set of procedures that everybody was using, that everybody was able to profit from, that would be my evidence of what practically led to success in moving people toward us.

CWII: And you were basically able to distill this into six elements of influence, is that right?

CIALDINI: You know, I thought I saw hundreds, maybe even thousands of individual practices and procedures and techniques and tactics, but, I thought I could classify the great majority of them into just six basic principles of influence, what I'll call the universals of influence, that worked wherever they were employed, on whomever they were employed, by whomever employed them. The power didn't come from the situation, the power came from these principles that infused whoever was using them with the energy to move people in their direction

CWII: I know that you are very cognizant of the way that these elements of influence are to be used and that you have very strong feelings about using them within an ethical framework. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

CIALDINI: Well, you're right. I am very concerned about the ethical use of these principles for both reasons having to do with the morality of what we do and how we feel about ourselves as a consequence. One sure way to burn out of any influence profession is to make it something we don't enjoy doing and one of the things people have a hard time doing is seeing themselves as somehow manipulative or cheaters and so on.

We don't want to see ourselves that way; we don't want other people seeing us that way. And to maintain longevity within a profession you have to feel good about your integrity, your self concept, and the contribution you're making. So, for one reason, just the morality - the ethics of what we're doing, it makes sense to do this, to take the high road with these principles. Secondly, there's a practical reason why I think taking the ethical approach is the preferred one. And that is it will produce the long term relationships that we need to make contact with, that we need to cultivate, that we need to make part of our network in order to reduce the effort and the time that it takes to make the follow up contact, the follow up sale, to get the referral, to get the next wave of business, to grow our business. That happens from having people who have been steered correctly to the right choices, not been fooled into those choices where their outcomes have been poor as a consequence.

CWII: There's the old joke about the guy who is falling off a ten story building, and at the fifth floor, you say how's it going, and he says well, pretty good so far. That's kind of the way it is when you're using these things in an unethical way that you can have a short term payoff, but the long term ramifications really are not good.

CIALDINI: Remember the term puric victories where you throw an army at something and you win a particular battle and in doing so decimates your ranks so undercuts your resources to wage the next battle, that you lose the war. And that's what precisely what I think happens with the unethical use of these principles. They're dynamite - you can use them like explosives for good or ill. And the problem is the short term success is so seductive that they can get people to use them. These principles can invite us to use them even when they are not in the long term interests of ourselves or our clients.

CWII: Now, I think that if we're to really grasp what we're going to be talking about it's important for our listeners to become familiar with a concept that you talk about called decision triggers. What are decision triggers, and how do they work?

CIALDINI: There are features of a situation that cause people to stop processing, stop thinking, stop researching, stop investigating the situation further and decide. At that point, when they get to that set of circumstances, or they encounter that particular principle and they say that's enough. I can move safely in this direction now. I've been convinced that this is an appropriate thing to do. And at that point, a trigger is pulled, the bullet is fired, the decision is made.

CWII: Give me an example of how that would work.

CIALDINI: Let me give you an example from an interesting setting that is a little far afield from the sales setting; it actually occurs in the field of animal behavior. Where turkeys, for example, are very loving mothers, turkey mothers warm their chicks beneath them, they care for them, they feed them and they're very solicitous. However, there's one feature of the chick that has to be present in order for this to

occur. A particular "cheep, cheep, cheep" sound that only turkey chicks make, and when they make that sound, that triggers maternal behavior, this loving motherly behavior on the part of the adult female turkey. If that "cheep, cheep" sound is not there, an otherwise intact turkey chick will be ignored, will be starved, and in some cases will be actually be killed by the mother because it doesn't have that one feature that triggers everything like an avalanche does, that allows everything to flow from that one decision point. Ah! This organism makes the "cheep, cheep, cheep" sound that I associate with turkey chicks, therefore, I can be maternal and be safe that in so doing I will have made the right decision.

CWII: Let's look at some specific elements of influence then and see how they turn into decision triggers. I want to start with one that you identified which is scarcity. Tell us a little bit about scarcity and what that is and how that works in an influence situation.

CIALDINI: One thing that makes people want something more is to know that they can't have it or that its availability is dwindling for them, or that it's scarce or rare in some fashion. We've seen the Cabbage Patch Kids craze a number of years ago; people paying \$700.00 at auction for these dolls that would cost \$25.00 in the store, but you couldn't get them in the store and so the scarcity, the lack of availability, conferred value on those things. Since then, there's been Beanie Babies, there's been Tickle Me Elmo, Furbies, and so on. You see the same crush of people who want something because its availability is dwindling or rare.

CWII: The other example of that is remember when Coke tried to replace the old Coke with the New Coke, what happened to cases of the old Coke?

CIALDINI: People went on a buying binge, a hoarding binge. They wanted the old Coke so much because it might be lost to them that they began going a little berserk in the way that they dealt with it. There was one guy in particular, a real estate salesman in Seattle who became a national celebrity. He started the old cola drinkers of America, he initiated a class action suit against the Coca Cola company, he issued buttons and banners and various kinds of material concerning the rejecting the new Coke and demanding the old Coke back. He set up a hotline for disgruntled callers. Now, what was interesting to me is that it didn't matter to this man that in two blind tests, he expressed a preference for the New Coke over the old. It wasn't the thing it was the contest in which the thing was placed, which was scarcity. Scarcity is one of those decision triggers. If we can't have it, we want it. We make a decision we want it.

CWII: Well, that's pretty clear to see how that works. Now, how would you use that in a sales and marketing situation? What is the practical implication of this element of influence?

CIALDINI: Two ways. First of all, we have to think about what it is that's unique, that's uncommon about what we have to offer that our clients, our customers, our vendors, our distributors, whoever it is we're trying to influence can't get if they don't move in our direction. What is it that we give them that they lose if they don't say yes to us? And the reason that I'm emphasizing this word lose is that the evidence is very clear now, people are more motivated by the idea of losing something than of gaining that very same thing.

CWII: So, they will be more apt to take action in a way that will protect them from loss than they would be to take action that would illicit some kind of gain.

CIALDINI: Exactly. There was a study done, for example, in Santa Cruz, California. Researchers went door to door in certain neighborhoods with an official from the local power company who did an energy audit on each of the homes, telling homeowners where they should use weather stripping and insulate,

and so on. And at the end of this audit, the official gave them a figure, let's say it was \$.75 and said if you will insulate your home fully, you will save \$.75 a day every day. That was for half of them, the other half were told, if you fail to insulate your home fully, you will lose \$.75 a day every day. Significantly more people insulated their homes under the loss instruction than under the gain instruction, even though it was the same thing.

CWII: So, what our listeners really have to understand is that it is not just the content of what we are presenting to our customers in the sales and marketing environment, it is the context in which we put the same information.

CIALDINI: That's right. In the context of loss, people are more motivated than in the context of gain. So, how many training programs have you been at where everyone is told "sell benefits"? That's true, but you need to do more than simply tell people what they stand to gain. You need to tell them what benefits they stand to lose if they don't choose in your direction. People are more motivated by that idea. There was just a recent study that I saw that came out, if you ask college students to think about the possibility of losing as opposed to gaining in their grade point average, they're much more upset by the idea of losing ground than they are enthused about the idea of gaining ground. Loss is more powerful and we should take it into account. People want to know what they stand to lose.

CWII: Now, one of the oldest axioms in the world of sales is that people buy from people they like. Now, certainly your research has indicated that that is true, but the interesting question is then, how to do you get somebody to be likable, how does a sales person become likable and, in fact, there are answers to that question.

CIALDINI: There are, and the research, fifty years of research now into the question, has implicated what I would say are three major routes to liking. Liking flows from positive connections, and those positive connections are: similarities, compliments, and cooperative endeavors. Let's take them in turn. Similarities - we like people who are like us. Again, if we go back to the training programs that we've all been in, we were told to do something unethical. Claim a commonality to somebody, claim that there's a similarity between you. You're selling them a car and you see that their license plate says, or that they bought the car in Minnesota, and you claim, "Oh, my wife's from Minnesota!" Or you see golf balls on the back seat, and you say, "Oh, you're a golfer? Well, me too. Where do you golf?" And suddenly there's a bond between you that you can exploit for gain because this person's going like you more as a consequence.

The ethical way to do that, and just as effective, and I'm going to claim more effective, is to find something that's genuinely in common between the two of you. Something that you can find a real connection with this person to, engage in a genuine conversation and not only will that cause that individual to like you, you will come to like that person because you have found something that's similar. And we are just as susceptible to these principles as the people we're talking to, right? That means, now, you've got two people who like one another doing business. And here's the key, George, here's the key for me. It's not that your client likes you that's important, it's when your client sees that you like him or her that the influence barriers come down.

CWII: And one is perceived as being genuine, which, in fact, it would be under the circumstances that you're describing.

CIALDINI: You've got it exactly right. You've arranged the circumstances so that you truly come to like that person, we can see that, when people really like us. And when we know somebody likes us, we

know that they will not take advantage of us. We don't take advantage of the people we like, no, we give them the best possible arrangement, the best possible deal. And they can exhale. I'm dealing with somebody, not necessarily who I like, who likes me; the implications are significant.

I just heard a radio interview a couple of months ago. The person was a former producer of the Oprah Winfrey show. She said something very interesting happened during the run of the Oprah Winfrey show. When it first began, Oprah weighed a lot more than she does now, and she's gone up and down, she's had weight issues. And a lot of her audience were women sitting at home who had some of those same weight issues. And then she began to lose weight, and the producers were worried that they would lose that audience. And sure enough, they began to lose some of those people. And they did some focus groups to see why and they said, okay, so now Oprah doesn't weigh as much and so I guess you're not as similar to Oprah and so I guess you don't like her as much and that's why you're not watching. And these women said something remarkable. They said, "No, that's not why we've stopped watching. Now that she's thin we don't think she'd like us anymore, and that's why we're not watching." Here's the implication, you want people to stay with you? You want people to make themselves available to influence? You want people to see themselves at one with you? You find a way to like them and that's what keeps them with you.

CWII: Now, I think one of the other aspects of liking that you mentioned really kind of plays into that, which is compliments.

CIALDINI: Praise and again, in those training programs we were often taught praise people, give them a compliment, whatever is prominent. Say you like their tie, if you meet them at their homes, say you like their lawn, say you like the décor. If a kid goes by, say you like the children. Whatever it is you're supposed to compliment. And, no doubt, that that will work because we're tremendous suckers for flattery in this culture, but more effective is to find something genuinely commendable about that person before you begin the influence process and remark on it, something admirable and remark on it. Give genuine praise and not only will that person come to like you, once again, you have found a way to like that person. And now, you've got the best context for business for ongoing continuous business that I know, two people who like one another dealing with one another. So, find a way to get people to like you and here are two ways: genuine compliments and genuine similarities.

CWII: And there's a third aspect to liking...

CIALDINI: Cooperation. We like those people who we cooperate with toward common goals. I just saw a research study that showed that people who have genuine cooperative interests in a situation, in fifty to sixty percent of the time, they don't recognize that they have genuinely cooperative interests in the situation, they only see the differences of opinion. And what comes to prominence under those circumstances is the conflict. What needs to be researched, understood, brought to the surface is the dimensions of commonality and cooperative mutuality. We have the same goals here, let's bring those to the surface, let's make everything occur in the context of a cooperative set of goals at the outset and, again, it changes everything. The context is different, it goes from conflict cooperation we like the people we are cooperating with and, once again, when two people like each other, they find a way to make good things happen.

CWII: Bob, let's move to the next element of influence, and this is probably my personal favorite, and that is the element of social proof. In my experience, that if this is used skillfully, it's almost an unfair advantage. Could you tell our listeners a little bit about what social proof is and how it works in a sales and marketing situation.

CIALDINI: Sure. One of the most important ways we decide what is important for ourselves in any given situation, what's appropriate for ourselves to do or think or believe in a situation is to look at what the people around us just like us have done or are doing there. And what that means for somebody in a sales and influence situation, marketing situation, is that we need to provide people with evidence that others like them have made this choice that we're recommending for them with profit for them. That means testimonials, that means having at the ready a list of people whose phone numbers they could call, who've used your services, who've used your products successfully in the past and have told you about it and said, "Thanks, I really appreciate what you've done for me. That was a great thing that the (product or the service or the opportunity)...". And those people can be more powerful sources of information and persuasion than you can be in many situations because they're just like the individual who is trying to decide.

CWII: One of the things that occurs to me is, for example, when you have an infomercial for a home gym product. They don't have someone who looks like Miss America, they have someone who could still lose a few pounds, but it's been working out and that's a more credible testimonial because it is someone who the viewer perceives is like them.

CIALDINI: And that's so easy to forget, George. So often, I see salesmen trying to brag about the biggest sale that they got last year. "You know, my insurance company insures the Grand Ol Opry or the Twin Towers!" Well, this is a mom and pop drycleaners that they're talking to that they say to themselves, "Well that's fine for the Prudential company (or whatever) but what does that have to do with me?" Much better would be to talk about the guy across town who you also insure who is a drycleaner and who has gone with you in a profitable and successful way. That's the thing you have to remember. You're not in the position of bragging to these people, you want to provide them with information about what's going to be best for them.

CWII: A reference point of people who are, or who they perceive to be, just like them.

CIALDINI: Just like them. And if you can do more than one of those, you get the notion of "Oh, this isn't just one person, it's anybody who's in the situation of my circumstances will have a favorable"

CWII: As you keep adding more, it becomes so much more powerful.

CIALDINI: So much more powerful. I was buying a car recently and sat down a desk while a sales person was away and there was a photo album on the desk. And it was this sales person standing next to every customer who had bought a car from him over the past couple of years and you could just page through and see smiling face after smiling face after smiling face. Some of those people looked like I knew, some of those people who were just like me, dressed like me, looked like me, had my same kind of background, it seemed. Of course, the message is clear - consensus, consensus. This is a good product; this is a good guy.

CWII: Bob, there's another influence principle that you've talked about, which is reciprocation and you've stated that used properly it is almost irresistible. Tell our listeners a little bit about what reciprocation is and how that works in a sales situation.

CIALDINI: The business world is becoming a global enterprise and one of the principles that works in every human culture, it's one of the reasons that it's so powerful, is the principle for reciprocation. There's a rule that every culture trains into its members from childhood. It is that you are obligated to

give back to me the form of behavior that I first give to you. That is universal, so if you're ever dealing with somebody who is brought up in another culture from our own, you don't have to worry that this principle won't work. It is this sense of obligation to give back, to repay what you have received. So, one of the things that we need to do to recognize is that when we go into a situation, if we want to be maximally effective, we don't want to look around and say, "Who can help me here?" To really set the context for future influence, we want to say, "Whom can I help here?" If we give something first, if we provide something that benefits that individual, especially that person's business, that individual is honor bound to help our business in return. That's what the rule says. And for me, that's not pins and calendars and so on, it's something like information. Information that will help them do their job better, to achieve, to move to the next level that we might have that will be very appreciated and will spur a desire for that person to help us to move to the next level that we want to achieve.

CWII: So something, for example, like a free report, that is not just a sales letter in disguise but that does, in fact, have useful and valuable information for the person who gets it.

CIALDINI: Right, you might know something about their industry in general that they might not know yet, especially if its new information that you can provide. It has such a cache of value. But, let's say you're on an airplane and you see an in-flight magazine article on something that's not, doesn't have to do with your industry, but it has to do with one of your client's industries. Now that client isn't on that plane, so they're going to miss that article. Cut that out and send that to them. If you're in Cleveland and your client is in Sarasota, they're not going to read the Cleveland paper, but there's an article in there that's relevant to what they do; cut that out and send it to them. It sends them two messages. One is I'm thinking about you and secondly, I care about enhancing your business.

CWII: And the way reciprocation works is that it is triggered in a way that it's almost irrelevant, the objective value of what is being given. For example, in the example you just gave, for the cost of the stamp you get a return in the business relationship that far outweighs what the stamp costs.

CIALDINI: And even if that information turns out to be something the person already knows, that's not even important. What's important is that you tried to help them and now, in order to live up to the rule for reciprocity, their obligation is to try to help you when they can because you took that first step. It's a remarkably powerful principle and we can use it in all kinds of situations that we often fumbled away, we don't even recognize that it's right there waiting for us to use. Being first, giving the first piece of information, the first leg up, the first opportunity for aid then it flows back to us.

CWII: Another variation on that theme is that in many types of sales, and in particular, in business-to-business sales, there is an element of the sales process that is in effect a negation. It's often better to be the first person to make a concession.

CIALDINI: Exactly. When you make a concession the rule says the other person has to meet you half way, make a concession in return. So, it's possible to set the stage for a cooperative give and take, what you really want to get to for the decision, ultimate decision where everybody's satisfied by beginning with a concession, "Alright, if we're at loggerheads here, if we have incompatible positions, let me suggest this to you, George. How about if I move from my position over here and I'll make a concession here: we'll make a commitment to you that we'll deliver a week ahead of the time that we normally say that our delivery period is. Will that help you make a decision? What could you provide in return then for that?" Well then, you're going to say, "Well, if you can do that for me, maybe here's what I can do

for you. I can provide a commitment of such and such an order to get us started and see if it works out." And then, you've got people on the road.

CWII: Because they can't remain inflexible if the face of a concession because of the nature of what we talked about at the outset, the way the decision triggers work.

CIALDINI: If you do offer a concession, and they can't take advantage of it, there's another point of power right at that moment, where you can say, "Well, if you can't do that, could you give me a referral to somebody who could use my product at precisely this time, for whom it would be." And at that point, once again, there's the obligation to give back. The key is to be first. Be first with concessions, be first with information, be first with benefits, be first with a positive attitude and exactly what you give flows back to you.

CWII: You use the word power and that leads to the fifth element of influence -- the element of authority. How does authority work in a sales situation?

CIALDINI: Well, I think that the way it works most impressively is when the person that you're trying to influence recognizes your expertise, your background, your credentials in a particular arena. And then feels, one of those triggers is there. I'm talking to an expert, I'm talking to somebody who really knows the ropes here. I can feel secure in following an expert's opinion. As a consequence, when I go to a grocery store, George, and I want to buy a good tube of toothpaste, I don't want to first go to my university library and research the chemical constituents of a good dentifrice, I want to turn the box over, I want to see that the American Council on Dental Health has approved this as a good toothpaste, and bang, it's in my cart and I'm on my way to my next decision. I want to follow genuine authorities, but I have to know that somebody's a genuine authority. Now, here's the problem, you can't walk into somebody's office and start tooting your own horn, you can't start bragging about yourself because then you seem like a jerk, you seem like a boastful braggart.

CWII: So, how do you do it?

CIALDINI: I think you do it with something that other cultures use much more effectively than we do - the letter of introduction. Before you get in that office, you send a letter that says, prior to our meeting of next week, I just wanted to introduce myself to you and tell you a little bit about my background. For some reason it's all together appropriate in a letter of introduction to talk about where you went to school, what your major was, how long you've been in the business, what your background is, where you worked before, and so on, because it's preparatory to the meeting that you're going to have. Once you walk in the door and you're face to face with somebody, you can't do that anymore. It comes off like boastfulness and it turns that person off. The letter of recommendation.

CWII: That's a great idea and it's something that I suspect hasn't really occurred to many of our listeners.

CIALDINI: Yeah, in South America, in Asia, in the Middle East, they use the letter of introduction much more that we do and we should take our lesson from them.

CWII: The other aspect of authority that you talk about is reliability, that our clients, our prospects, our customers have to know that we're reliable. What is that about?

CIALDINI: It's a sense that just because this person is an expert doesn't mean that this person is trustworthy, that they're giving me expert information in a straightforward, honest way. Maybe they're just trying to line their own pockets, maybe they're just trying to serve their own interests in this situation.

CWII: That's a shocking idea that the customer might perceive the salesperson as just trying to line their own pockets. Obviously, that's common perception. How do you get around that?

CIALDINI: Here's what I heard in all of the sales training programs. You work with people and over a period of weeks, or months, or longer, if you're a straight shooter, what evolves is a perception of you as a credible, trustworthy source of information. Now I don't doubt that at all. Here's the problem. What if you don't have weeks or months or longer? What if you're dealing with somebody for the first time? You are speaking absolutely from a reality base, you're not trying to pull any wool over anybody's eyes, you're giving them the straight scoop, you are trustworthy, how do you get that information across to them? And there's a strategy that was developed by the advertising community because they are constantly in the position of having to introduce new products to audiences that don't know anything about it. And here's the strategy that is effective under those circumstances. Before you provide your strongest argument, you mention a weakness in your case. You mention that you've got good competitors and they have excellent products, too or that you're not the largest manufacturer in the industry. Something they already know but what they didn't know is that you would be willing to say what's wrong with your product as well as what's right. And as soon as you've done that, you're in the context of credibility.

CWII: We're number two, but we try harder.

CIALDINI: We're number two, but we try harder. We're L'Oreal, we're expensive, but we're worth it. We're the Peace Corps, it's the toughest job you'll ever love. Listerine - it's the taste you hate three times a day. I mean, you get the idea. And every one of those successful commercials, before the strongest argument, they set the context of credibility and now the barriers are down and people will believe the stronger argument. We have this tendency to want to lead with our strong segments, getting people leaning in our direction and then we slip in the negatives to be truthful about the whole package. It's human but it's wrong headed. Before the strongest argument, you have to mention a weakness if these people don't know you as trustworthy ahead of time. Now, I'm not saying the first thing you do is walk into somebody's office and say, "Hey, let me tell you what's wrong with me." No, but before the strongest argument a drawback and that makes the strong argument so much more powerful now because it's coming from a truthful person, an acknowledged, a demonstrably, a manifestly truthful person.

CWII: I want to close with the last element of influence. It's something that you refer to as commitment and consistency. Sales people have been taught for I don't know how long, but one of the things you want to do in a sales situation, is get people in the habit of saying yes as if somehow you're going to hypnotize a client into just continuing to say yes. That is wrong in its essence but there is an underlying element of truth. Tell us a little bit about that.

CIALDINI: That's right, that's superficially right because what you really want to do is make contact with an existing commitment within an individual and that means taking some time to know your customer well enough so you can identify the priorities, the values that that person has. And then your job is to link those existing commitments that this person has, let's say to advance technology or cutting edge research or prestige or good value or whatever it is that this person thought. Then you have to show

how what they already are committed to is consistent with what you can offer them and then the power is there in the situation inside them. You don't have to be there anymore, you just need to have drawn the link in their mind to what they already value and prioritize to your product or service and you can walk away and the motive will be inside them working in your direction. You don't have to be there twisting any arms.

CWII: So, you want to help them explicitly stake out or express a position and then position your product in a way that it plays to that position that they've taken.

CIALDINI: Exactly, one of the greatest developments in the commercial enterprise is market research. Every organization worth its salt does research of its market, its target market, to see what it is that its customer's want, what they value, and so on and then they configure their products and services to provide what it is that people want, and that's an excellent way. What I'm suggesting is that we need to do what I call personal market research with each individual we want to move in our direction. Before we ever try to influence them, we need to spend enough time with them, we need to have an interaction in which we have pulled out the evidence as to what it is that they most are committed to, most value, most want to achieve, and then our job begins to sell. Until then, we needed to do the research that will allow us to do surgical selling. You can go right in and say, "Well, what you've told me, from what I can tell, is what you really want in this situation is reliability. You don't want any downtime on this computer system, right? Let me show you how we stack up against our competitor." So that's where you go, you don't go in some predetermined direction that you've set, you let the customer determine what is important and then you go in a reactive way to what it is that they've staked out as their crucial commitments.

CWII: This is extremely powerful stuff. It's important information for all of our listeners. I want to thank you for spending time with us today.

CIALDINI: I've enjoyed it very much.

More about Robert Cialdini's work: <http://www.influenceatwork.com>

More about Mark Hendricks' work: <http://www.hunteridge.com>